



Congressman  
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**Committees**

**Energy and Commerce  
Committee**

Health Subcommittee  
Telecommunications and  
the Internet Subcommittee

**International Relations  
Committee**

Chair, Western  
Hemisphere Subcommittee  
Europe Subcommittee  
Middle East and South  
Asia Subcommittee

Co-Chair, House Oil and  
National Security Caucus



November 2007

Dear Friend:

I am writing to update you on some of my recent actions on behalf of America's veterans.

**Increasing the Funds for VA Healthcare Services**

I recently **voted to increase the 2008 Veterans Administration budget by \$6.6 billion**. This is the largest increase in the VA budget in history. In addition, I opposed the proposed fee increases for veterans' health care.

I have also consistently supported the "Independent Budget" proposals, which are VA budgets co-authored each year by the AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Paralyzed Veterans of America. Their proposals take into account the growing healthcare needs of our older veterans.

Over the years **I have obtained millions of dollars to improve services at the VA hospitals** that serve veterans in our Congressional District including the Bronx VA Hospital.

**Legislation to Improve Veterans Health Care**

I co-sponsored and worked to pass legislation that will improve veterans' health care and establish strict standards and oversight of VA Hospitals including the Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act, VA Hospital Quality Report Card Act, Wounded Warriors Assistance Act and the Returning Service Member VA Healthcare Insurance Act.

The **Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act** requires that VA facilities treat veterans in rooms with the highest standard of cleanliness and maintenance, requires twice yearly room inspections, increases caseworker training, and creates an ombudsman for wounded veterans.

The **Hospital Quality Report Card Act** mandates that, at a minimum, there are semiannual reports on each VA hospital's quality including its effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness of treatment and patient safety.

We ask our service men and women to put their lives in danger serving our nation. We owe each and every one of them the quality healthcare they need.

The **Wounded Warriors Assistance Act** I co-sponsored provides for a seamless transition for wounded soldiers between active duty and veterans' status to prevent delays in needed health care treatment.

It will require a single system for electronic health records and only one exam for both exit from active duty and entrance to the VA system. The burden

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to collect and transfer medical information would no longer fall upon a wounded soldier.

I am also a co-sponsor of the **Returning Service Member VA Healthcare Insurance Act** that extends the time a veteran can receive hospital treatment for injuries received while in service from two years to five years.

### **The Montrose VA Hospital**

I opposed the recent Veterans Administration decision to end most inpatient care at Montrose and transfer veterans to Castle Point Hospital in Fishkill.

Congress Members John Hall and Nita Lowey and our US Senators joined me in demanding that the VA keep comprehensive medical services at Montrose.

The VA was wrong to transfer services. It is essential that we keep our promises to our veterans that they earned with their service to our country. Services must be close enough so veterans can take advantage of them.

The VA did agree to build a new "multi-specialty" outpatient center at Montrose that will serve area veterans. I will work to make sure the VA constructs the new center at Montrose.

### **Improving and Making Sure Veterans are Informed About Benefits**

I support the **Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act** to provide an automatic cost-of-living increase for veterans' benefits and the Veteran Vision Equity Act to increase compensation to veterans who sustained significant vision loss while on duty.

In order to make sure that veterans know of the benefits and services to which they are entitled, I am supporting the **Veterans Outreach Improvement Act**. It would provide funding to increase outreach and information to veterans.

Several years ago I made this statement explaining why I work so hard on behalf of veterans' benefits: **"We cannot be a great society if we treat our veterans poorly. We cannot be a great society if we ignore those who have done so much for all of us. We cannot be a great society if we fail those who did not fail us."**

I need your comments and opinions on these critical veterans issues. Please send them to any of my three District Offices or to my Congressional Office in Washington, D.C. I look forward to hearing from you.

If you are a veteran, or know one who needs assistance in obtaining Veterans Administration benefits, please contact any of my District Offices.

Sincerely,



Eliot L. Engel

Member of Congress

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**E-MAIL UPDATES:** You can receive special e-mail issue updates from Congressman Eliot Engel. All you have to do is go to Congressman Engel's website at [www.house.gov/engel](http://www.house.gov/engel) and click on "Sign up for Eliot's E-mail Updates" and complete the form. You can also contact any of Congressman Engel's offices and request to receive the e-mail updates.